

## **SPOTLIGHT for February 2020**

### **Dr. Marianne Sullivan: Track Director for the Global Public Health Track**

Dr. Marianne Sullivan is a professor at William Paterson in the Public Health Department, and is also the Track Director for the Honors College's newest track in Global Public Health, which launched in the fall of 2019.

The Global Public Health track provides an intensive and interdisciplinary option to students who have an interest in the health of human populations. For students majoring in fields other than public health, this track will provide them with an opportunity to connect what they are learning in their majors to the overarching issue of human health and its determinants. For public health majors, this track provides an opportunity for deeper, more intensive study with public health faculty. Students who complete the track will be well prepared for graduate study in social sciences, physical sciences, or various programs such as nursing, medicine, public health, law, civil engineering, etc.

#### **What drew you to become a track director?**

I wanted the opportunity to work more closely with students on really interesting public health problems that occur both in New Jersey and around the world. Issues like the public health impacts of climate change, emerging infectious diseases, childhood lead poisoning, and advancing US environmental policy.

#### **Your track was new as of the fall of 2019. What are your preliminary goals for the track?**

To fill the track with excellent students doing high quality, relevant research.

#### **What kind of research did you do as an undergraduate or graduate student that was particularly useful?**

I've done a lot of community-based research, which has helped me understand how public health works at the local level. For example, when I was in my graduate program I worked on a project on tobacco control in East Harlem. This was a fascinating opportunity to learn about the devastation that tobacco inflicts, particularly on low-income communities in the US and to come up with strategies, along with the community, to try to change the physical and social environment so that young people are able to remain tobacco-free, and current smokers are able to quit. I've also worked on many other research topics such as green housing for asthma control, access to domestic violence services for refugee and immigrant women, and childhood lead exposure near mines and other industrial facilities.

#### **QUESTION: What kind of research are you hoping for from students in your track?**

I'm hoping that the students in the track will fall in love with the field of public health and its social justice principles, and that they develop (with our guidance) research projects on topics they are passionate about that are relevant to the communities they care about. Students in the track are already coming up with exciting thesis ideas such as examining the differential impact of sexually transmitted diseases on women, investigating how racism influences reproductive health, and the mental health impacts of sexual harassment among adolescents.

**What excites you about the Honors College at William Paterson?**

The Honors College provides a unique opportunity for students and faculty to pursue academic and artistic interests in a supportive and fun environment. Honors College students are doing amazing work that will help prepare them for further study or leadership roles in their chosen fields.

**QUESTION: What is one thing from your own research/writing that you'd like to share with students?**

Research and writing can be powerful tools for social change.